

# **Flu Vaccine Shortage Information**

Thank you for contacting me to obtain information on flu shots. As you may know, almost half of the nation's flu vaccine will not be delivered this year, because of manufacturing problems at Chiron's manufacturing facility. As a result, there will be 46-48 million fewer doses of flu vaccine available in the United States.

Because of this shortage, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) have changed their guidance about who should get vaccinated this season. Even with the narrowed guidelines, many New Jersey residents who qualify for a flu shot under the new CDC guidelines are finding the vaccine in short supply. As a result, I have compiled information to better inform you of the issues surrounding the shortage. Below you will find answers to frequently asked questions and contact information for federal, state, and local health officials charged with coordinating the distribution of vaccine during the coming flu season.

## **Frequently Asked Questions:**

### **Who should be vaccinated?**

According to the CDC, the existing flu vaccine supplies should be provided to those who are at greatest risk of serious complications from influenza disease.

Everyone in this group should be vaccinated:

- People 65 years of age and older
- Children ages 6 months to 23 months
- Adults and children 2 years of age and older with chronic lung or heart disorders including heart disease and asthma
- Women who will be pregnant during the influenza season
- Adults and children 2 years of age and older with chronic metabolic diseases (including diabetes), kidney diseases, blood disorders (such as sickle cell anemia), or weakened immune systems, including persons with HIV/AIDS
- Children and teenagers, 6 months to 18 years of age, who take aspirin daily
- Residents of nursing homes and other chronic-care facilities
- Household members and out-of-home caregivers of infants under the age of 6 months (Children under the age of 6 months cannot be vaccinated.)
- Healthcare workers who provide direct, hands-on care to patients

### **Who should go without vaccination?**

Healthy people 2 to 64 years of age are asked to postpone or skip getting a flu shot this year so that available vaccine can go to protect those at greater risk for flu complications.

### **What about the nasal vaccine, FluMist ® ?**

FluMist ®, the nasal-spray flu vaccine, is an option for healthy individuals, ages 5 to 49 years of age. FluMist ® is **not** recommended for healthcare workers taking care of severely immunocompromised people when they are in a protective environment and cannot be given to pregnant women.

### **What else can you do to prevent the spread of flu?**

There are certain good health habits that can help prevent the spread of flu. The CDC recommends the following:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from other to protect them from getting sick too.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze – and dispose of the tissue afterward.
- If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your sleeve.
- Wash your hands after you cough or sneeze – with soap and warm water, or an alcohol-based hand cleaner.
- If you get the flu, stay home from work or school. You will help prevent others from catching your illness.

### **What if you are in a high risk group and your clinic has no vaccine?**

The CDC has implemented a flu vaccine redistribution plan in coordination with state and local health departments. In the coming weeks, the members of the CDC will work with state and county health officials to redirect supplies of flu vaccine to areas of greatest need in New Jersey and throughout the country. As a result of this close coordination, the Centers for Disease Control has advised that you contact your local health department intermittently in the coming weeks to keep apprised of developments in the area of flu vaccine redistribution.

### **Who can I contact for more information on flu vaccine availability?**

The CDC is coordinating with state and local health department officials to ensure that New Jersey citizens at the greatest risk receive flu vaccinations. When flu vaccines become available, the local health department will be charged with distributing it based upon CDC guidelines.

For more information on the flu vaccine shortage, you can visit the CDC Flu Website at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/> or call the CDC Flu Hotline at (800) 232-2522. Additional information can be accessed by visiting the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services (NJDHSS) Website at <http://www.nj.gov/health/flu/index.shtml> or by calling the NJDHSS Flu hotline at (866) 234-0964.

For additional up-to-date information on flu vaccine availability, you may contact your county or local health department. [Click here](#) to find the department near you.